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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (*continued*) (A/54/25 and Add.1, A/54/80, A/54/98, A/54/212; A/C.2/54/5)

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(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (*continued*) (A/54/96)

(f) Implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/C.2/54/4)

1. **Mr. Desai** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), speaking with regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that whereas the Kyoto Protocol stipulated that the Parties included in Annex 1 to the Convention undertook to reduce their overall emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 5 per cent below 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008 to 2012, current trends suggested that those emissions would in fact increase by 18 per cent during that time period. There was a need for serious policy changes in the countries concerned if that trend was to be reversed and the target met. Those changes, which should be discussed at the Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, should include credible national systems for emissions accounting, reporting and review of emissions inventories, policy options for sinks, the role of domestic policies and the function of the Kyoto Protocol mechanism.

2. The Convention secretariat was administered according to the United Nations regulations and rules on personnel and financial matters, a cost-effective arrangement. The division of administrative tasks in support of the secretariat was currently under review with a view to concentrating as many as possible of those tasks in the secretariat in Bonn and minimizing the involvement of the United Nations Office at Geneva and of Headquarters in New York. In particular, funding conference services for the meetings of treaty bodies under the regular budget had led to considerable savings in the Convention budget during the 1996-1997 and 1998-1999 bienniums. That arrangement would be reviewed in the context of the adoption of the next convention budget and of the regular budget for the biennium 2000-2001. He hoped that the current arrangements would be maintained.

3. Because small island developing States were the most vulnerable to climate change, they had been the first to express concern at that problem and to take action to address it. However, they had not received adequate financial or technical support for the implementation of programmes under the Barbados Programme of Action. He hoped that the General Assembly would find the political will to provide such support.

4. It was time to consider whether the process of intergovernmental consultation and implementation begun in Rio and continued at a series of conferences and other forums was producing the desired results and whether those discussions were being translated into policy change at the level of Governments and regional institutions. It was important to ensure that the upcoming 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development focused on those important issues. To that end, a series of regional consultative meetings had been or would soon be held in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and there were plans to hold a meeting in order to promote an exchange of views among national bodies working in the field of sustainable development. In that regard, he welcomed the high level of voluntary reporting by Member States and suggested that an expert group on institutional arrangements should be established in order to determine whether those arrangements were capable of creating the necessary pressure for implementation.

5. Discussion of those matters should be part of a long-term assessment of global monitoring and critical trends. One of the most promising outcomes of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention had been the holding of a series of multi-stakeholder conferences with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which had played an important role in the Rio process. Those initiatives should be pursued.

6. It was easy to lose sight of long-term goals in times of financial crisis, but Member States needed to achieve clarity on such matters and to ensure that sustainable development remained the primary focus of the Organization's work.

7. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal), speaking with regard to agenda item 100 (e), said that implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa had been hindered by the fact that certain States Parties attached less importance to that instrument than to the other United Nations conventions on

the environment. Preservation of the environment for future generations required a global, integrated strategy that was fundamentally incompatible with a selective approach. Problems related to climate change, biodiversity and drought and desertification were interrelated and called for action at all levels in order to reverse the negative trends that impeded Member States' common progress towards sustainable development.

8. His Government was implementing the Convention through a participative, decentralized approach and, to that end, had developed a national plan of action to combat desertification through environmental education and training; programmes in the fields of, *inter alia*, agriculture, forestry, reforestation, energy; and involvement of local communities in natural resource management. His Government was also adopting, reviewing and harmonizing its legislation and regulations and adapting its administrative procedures to the needs of environmental management. He thanked the bilateral and multilateral partners that had provided assistance in those areas.

9. **Mr. Manele** (Solomon Islands) said that little international action had been taken to complement the efforts of small island developing States to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. His country had taken steps towards implementation of the Programme by adopting appropriate policies and enacting the necessary legislative measures. In that regard, biodiversity conservation, coastal and marine fisheries resources, agriculture, adaptation measures to cope with climate change and sea level rise would continue to be among priority areas where national, regional and international partnership would be critical. Equally important were effective strategies for natural disaster preparedness and mitigation. Investment in renewable sources of energy would contribute to the development of provincial and rural areas.

10. The special position of small island developing States must be recognized. Therefore, the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action must take into account the economic vulnerability and ecological fragility of those States as well as their limited resources. Official development assistance should be directed at capacity-building, both in terms of infrastructure and human resources development. A combination of capital and technical assistance was required to meet the goals and objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action. With the increasing risks posed by globalization and trade liberalization, the sustainable development of small island developing States had become more challenging. International support to assist those States in utilizing the opportunities and mitigating the negative impact of those global forces was vital. The role of the United Nations and other international institutions in ensuring stronger global governance of globalization was critical. In addition, international action was required to facilitate economic diversification, ensure market access, stabilize primary commodity prices and reverse declines in ODA flows.

11. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) said that more work was needed on the terms of reference for the Panel of Experts on Access and Benefit Sharing in order to ensure that the biological diversity within countries was carefully protected, while at the same time ensuring that such resources were utilized in a manner that fully respected the proprietary rights of indigenous communities and enabled the original developers in developing countries to share the benefits. The Panel must also carry out its work expeditiously, particularly with respect to access and benefit-sharing for scientific and commercial purposes. He hoped that the negotiations of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity would lead to the early adoption of a body of mutually agreed measures for global action on matters relating to biosafety. While genetically modified organisms represented a tremendous potential for food production and food security, the international community should proceed carefully, and within the bounds of common principles, so that the environment, and human health were not put in jeopardy. It was also imperative that relevant technologies should be widely shared in order to enable developing countries to increase their production of food and other agricultural products.

12. The countries that had not yet done so, were urged to sign or ratify the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible so that it could come into effect. Developed countries must undertake urgent and effective steps to implement their commitments under the Protocol. It was also critical for developing countries to be provided with adequate support in terms of resources and technical know-how so that they could meet their commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

13. His delegation fully supported the activities being carried out in connection with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Referring to paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/96), he said that it was his delegation's understanding that the Committee would have to endorse decision 3/COP/2 of the Conference of the Parties so that the Fifth Committee could take the necessary decisions regarding the budget. That was the procedure which had been followed at the fifty-second session.

14. The Philippines, an archipelago with a large number of small islands, fully understood how vulnerable small island developing States were to the fury of nature. The international community should therefore intensify its efforts to fully implement the Barbados Programme of Action and the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review and appraisal of the implementation of that Programme.

15. **Mr. Koech** (Kenya) said that the strengthening of the United Nations Office at Nairobi would enable the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to discharge its environmental duties more effectively. Noting that desertification affected 80 per cent of his country and 8 to 10 million people, he expressed great concern at the funding mechanisms of the desertification programmes and called on the developed countries to meet their obligations under the Convention to Combat Desertification. He likewise urged UNEP and other multinational agencies to explore more avenues for sustainable funding. The Global Mechanism, whose mandate included mobilizing and channelling financial resources should be assisted to become more effective and the Global Environment Facility should be restructured in order to increase funding for programmes under the Convention to Combat Desertification.

16. Kenya called on the international community, especially the developed countries, to reach mutual understanding with developing countries in the conservation of biodiversity. Apart from problems of inadequate financial resources to support implementation activities, particularly those of developing countries, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on Biodiversity and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, other urgent issues also needed to be tackled, including the reconciliation of trade and environment in the agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights. In that regard, the Convention should support the work by indigenous and local communities towards the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The biosafety protocol, should be completed as soon as possible.

17. While his country had a low emission ratio of greenhouse gases, it required further encouragement to use climate-friendly technologies. In that regard, it expected developed countries to respect their commitments under the Kyoto Protocol, since they were responsible for the highest emissions. Lastly, he reiterated his delegation's support for the United Nations initiative on small island developing States, which were vulnerable and faced constraints in their efforts to achieve development.

18. **Mr. Gabay** (Israel) said that the Convention on Biological Diversity was the first global convention which stated that conservation of biological diversity was a common concern of humankind and an integral part of sustainable development. The provisions of the Convention had ramifications on the world market in terms of international agreements on trade and biotechnologies, access to genetic resources and gene banks, development of agricultural products, use of natural resources and rehabilitation of ecological systems. In compliance with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Israel had integrated a number of measures into its sustainable development programmes, including dryland development with the conservation of biodiversity, and the mitigation of climate change through afforestation and solar energy development.

19. In that connection, the approach of the International Programme for Arid Land Crops, an international effort sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for International Cooperation of Israel, was based on the finding that the most influential force in the history of agriculture had been the transfer of plant germplasm and crops between geographical regions. The initiative for collaboration in combating desertification in the drylands of the Middle East was facilitated by the World Bank and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas. Research and development projects were carried out by Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Israel. Israel's efforts in that field showed its determination to promote peaceful and friendly relations with all its neighbours.

20. His country was deeply committed to sharing its experience in the area of dryland development, with other countries. In that regard, the Blaustein Institute for Desert Research, which had been upgraded into an international centre for combating desertification, would mobilize all relevant Israeli and international organizations in catering to the Middle Eastern, Asian, African and Latin American countries affected by desertification. The Centre had launched a number of educational innovations and had established a computer-mediated information centre. Israel also promoted partnership in desertification-related research with developed countries and had signed tripartite agreements on research that linked it to the United States of America, Germany and the Netherlands.

21. In his delegation's view, only regional cooperation and cross-border partnerships, not politics, could stop desertification. Regional boundaries should therefore not exist to prevent cooperation, but to promote it.

22. **Mr. Chouinard** (Canada) said that the environmental threats facing the world were of such magnitude that all countries must act together to tackle them. That fact had been demonstrated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In that regard, a strong, legally binding agreement on forests, that built on the forest principles established at Rio, was the best way to create and channel the political will needed to comprehensively address the problems facing the world's forests. At its next session the Commission on Sustainable Development would have to make a crucial decision on future international arrangements and mechanisms on that subject. Such decision would be based on the recommendation of the fourth and final meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests to be held in New York in February 2000. At the initiative of Canada and Costa Rica, a series of regional meetings, attended by representatives of both developed and developing countries as well as stakeholder groups, had been held to identify possible elements and work towards a consensus on international arrangements and mechanisms. His delegation was convinced that those meetings would contribute to a better understanding and full consideration of the concerns of countries and other interested parties.

23. Climate change stood out as one of the most difficult pressing environmental challenges. The international community must now work together to facilitate implementation of the commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and reduction of global emissions of greenhouse gasses. His delegation viewed early agreement on the Kyoto mechanisms as particularly important. Emissions trading, and projects to reduce emissions through the clean development mechanism and joint implementation processes, could help to meet obligations in a cost-effective manner. Basic guidelines were also necessary to ensure proper monitoring, reporting and verification of emissions reduction.

24. Since desertification contributed to the impoverishment of a large number of developing countries, particularly in Africa, efforts to combat it represented a crucial international challenge. Noting that Canada had provided more than $400,000 to support the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and had spent approximately $40 million on bilateral projects related to desertification, he urged all countries that had not yet become parties to the Convention to do so in order to help to combat that phenomenon more effectively.

25. Canada attached considerable importance to the elaboration of a global convention on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The indigenous peoples of northern Canada were particularly susceptible to such pollutants, which tended to travel to colder climates and accumulate in the food chain. A strong and effective convention must be science-based, transparent and capable of attracting a high level of compliance.

26. Canada welcomed the positive outcome of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly with regard to oceans and seas. It hoped that the Commission's recommendation on a new, open consultative process would help to broaden and enhance the General Assembly's annual debate on oceans and the law of the sea and that that would lead to improved international coordination and cooperation. Canada had participated in the special session of the General Assembly for a full and comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and would continue to support the implementation of the Programme of Action. Partnership between small island States and the international community was a key factor in the implementation of both the Barbados Programme of Action and the final document adopted by the special session.

27. His delegation called for the integration of trade and environmental policies and for coordination between national ministries in those areas. Mutually supportive trade and environmental policies were essential to ensuring that the next round of negotiations of the World Trade Organization and the ongoing work of the United Nations contributed to the achievement of sustainable development. Trade policies must not become obstacles to environmental protection and, conversely, environmental policies must not curb trade unnecessarily. His delegation supported greater cooperation and coordination between WTO and UNEP, particularly in building an understanding of the complex relationship between trade liberalization and environmental objectives and in establishing a framework to clarify the relationship between multilateral environmental agreements and WTO.

28. **Mr. Robertson** (New Zealand) said that new approaches, such as closer partnerships between Governments and the private sector, would be vital to achieving sustainable development. The 10-year review of Agenda 21, to be held in 2002, must not be a repeat of the disappointing nineteenth special session. Participants in the review must be well prepared and willing to engage in substantive and meaningful dialogue. His delegation welcomed the recommendations formulated by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session for further work on sustainable development, particularly the consultative process to facilitate improved

consideration of ocean issues within the United Nations system.

29. His delegation welcomed the outcomes of the recent special session on small island developing States and hoped that Member States would make every effort to meet their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. It supported efforts to take into account the particular ecological and economic vulnerabilities of small island developing States, for example, through the inclusion of appropriate vulnerability indicators in the criteria for granting least-developed-country status.

30. He expressed satisfaction at the efforts of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to enhance cooperation with other agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WTO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and within the framework of the (Ramsar) Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat. The longer intervals between sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention should be used to increase scientific input in the process and to prioritize activities. It would be important to focus on high-priority, cross-cutting issues. Improved planning, enhanced regional processes and clear decisions were also vital to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

31. New Zealand shared the deep concern of other countries in its region over climate change, particularly sea-level rise and changing weather patterns. In that connection, the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was a positive but incomplete achievement. It was therefore crucial for the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to make substantive progress on key elements of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the timely entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and the development of rules for its implementation on a least-cost basis. Emissions trading should proceed on a liberal and open basis, without restrictions such as quotas or ceilings that would distort the market. Developed countries must take the lead in addressing climate change; however, significant developing country emitters must also undertake commitments commensurate with their individual national circumstances.

32. **Mr. Draunimasi** (Fiji) said that all Member States should focus greater attention on implementing the Barbados Plan of Action and take concrete action to that end. His delegation had already reiterated its concern at the slow pace of progress in that regard. The development problems of small island States with respect to drinking water supply, education, health, infrastructure, energy and food security were fundamental to human survival but could not be overcome without the assistance of the United Nations system and the international community.

33. His Government's long-term sustainable development strategies were aimed at upgrading the living standard of the citizens of Fiji, eradicating poverty, empowering women and youth, increasing employment and protecting the environment, in particular from land degradation and the trans-shipment of hazardous and toxic material across the oceans. It had enacted a law on the sustainable use of Fiji's limited renewable and non-renewable land and sea resources and readjusted its sectoral policies with a view to ensuring sustained natural resource utilization; the development of human-resource-based industries; the improvement of social services in the fields of health, education and housing; poverty alleviation; rural and urban development; and disaster management.

34. In an era of globalization and liberalization, the small island developing States were finding it difficult to regain the market access and preferential treatment that had once helped them to become more self-reliant. Under those circumstances, the provision of official development assistance was more crucial than ever. The developing countries had fulfilled their commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action and now called upon their developed partners to do likewise.

35. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that at the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago had stressed the need to enhance economic security and the quality of life in small island developing States. The sustainable development efforts of Trinidad and Tobago were focused on employment, poverty eradication, the retraining of its nationals and crime reduction.

36. Among the many social and economic challenges faced by small island developing States, issues relating to poverty, illicit drug trafficking, crime, and HIV/AIDS should be addressed on a priority basis. Her delegation embraced the poverty eradication strategy outlined by the President of the Economic and Social Council during the Council's July session and recognized the crucial role of partnership between Governments and the private sector in achieving sustainable development in such areas as education, human resource development and development infrastructure. National efforts to that end must be buttressed at the regional and international levels. In that connection, she noted that at the meeting of small island developing States and donors,

held in February, Trinidad and Tobago had submitted 22 projects for partnership funding in such areas as production, employment, income generation, poverty reduction and environmental equity. Thus far, three of the projects submitted by Trinidad and Tobago had attracted private-sector funding from the United States of America; Italy had indicated that it would contribute to a trust fund for public administration projects in three Caribbean small island developing States; and Singapore had established a technical assistance and training package for small island developing States.

37. In July 1999, the Caribbean Heads of Government had endorsed a proposal to recognize the Caribbean Sea, with its unique biodiversity and fragile ecosystem, as a special area in the context of sustainable development. She hoped that the Committee would support that initiative.

38. **Mr. Yoon Jong-soo** (Republic of Korea) said that burden-sharing and participation by developing countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol should be addressed once the industrialized countries had fulfilled their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, the clean development mechanism, joint implementation and emissions trading modalities of the Kyoto Protocol must be implemented urgently.

39. Referring to the Convention on Biological Diversity, he said that biotechnology was a double-edged sword which, on the one hand, created new opportunities for poverty eradication and, on the other hand, posed risks to the environment and human health. In view of the increasing trade in genetically modified organisms, their potential risks must be urgently addressed. It was therefore regrettable that a consensus had not been reached in February on the adoption of a protocol on biosafety. His delegation hoped that substantial progress to that end would be achieved at the resumed session of the first extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Montreal in January 2000.

40. The industrialized countries should help developing countries, particularly in Africa, to implement their own national action programmes to combat desertification. In that connection his delegation attached great importance to the efficient operation of the Global Mechanism. Having ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification in August, the Republic of Korea was a party to nearly all the major international environmental agreements. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of enhanced technological cooperation and financial assistance from industrialized countries in order to build the capacity of developing countries to meet environmental challenges.

41. **Mr. Badenhorst** (South Africa) said that, without enhanced concessional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology on concessional terms, developing countries would be unable to make significant progress in achieving sustainable development. His delegation had already stressed the need to begin discussing preparations for the 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21, and it was looking forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the form, scope and nature of the preparatory process, to be discussed at the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

42. His delegation welcomed and supported the initiatives for the future implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which had been adopted during the recent twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. Effective and successful implementation of those initiatives would require substantial financial resources, political will and the support of the relevant multilateral institutions.

43. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was of major importance to the African continent as a whole and to South Africa in particular. Nearly 50 per cent of South Africa was arid or semi-arid and was threatened by desertification. Recurrent drought in Africa had affected agriculture and caused severe poverty and malnutrition. His delegation hoped that developed country partners, would make voluntary contributions to the Global Mechanism, and that the Global Mechanism would increase its support for enabling activities such as partnership arrangements and the elaboration of national reports.

44. South Africa and the countries of the southern African region were particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and global warming. Repeated severe drought and occasional widespread flooding were hampering the subregion's sustainable development efforts. His delegation strongly supported the greenhouse gas stabilization objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the reduction measures contained in the Kyoto Protocol and the Protocol's early entry into force. It also supported the objectives of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and hoped that the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, currently taking place in Bonn, would conform to the timetable it established.

45. Noting that 80 per cent of the needs of the world's poor were derived from biological resources, his delegation welcomed the inter-sessional activities of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly the Panel

of Experts on Access and Benefit-sharing. It continued to support the conclusion of a balanced protocol on biosafety that would protect developing countries against harmful exports of genetically modified products without restricting developments in biotechnology. It called on all States participating in the negotiations to continue their efforts to conclude a protocol on biosafety at the resumed session of the first extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties in January 2000. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of innovative South-South cooperation and North-South partnerships in achieving sustainable development, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

46. **Ms. Jorgensen** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the goals of the Convention to Combat Desertification dovetailed with efforts by UNDP to improve governance for sustainable human development. The Convention also provided a valuable framework for implementing the Programme's agenda in the world's drylands. UNDP was implementing the Convention by providing support to country and regional initiatives and to the Global Mechanism. Its Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO) and its country offices provided support to affected countries for, *inter alia*, the development and implementation of national or subregional action programmes and the development of national desertification funds. Gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women in decision-making were key components of the Programme's activities to implement the Convention. Increasingly, countries were allocating resources through their country cooperation frameworks to deal with desertification and poverty. Since 1995, UNDP had provided support to some 50 countries and six subregions and would increase its support for resource mobilization through the resident coordinator system.

47. UNDP was prepared to facilitate the work of the Global Mechanism at the country level by building partnerships; assisting in resource mobilization at country level through the round-table mechanism and other appropriate processes; supporting affected countries in developing programmes to attract funding; facilitating the work of the Global Mechanism; and, as a member of the Facilitation Committee, continuing to support the work of the Global Mechanism in developing its operations.

48. The two greatest challenges were integrating national action plans into other national development planning frameworks and ongoing programmes and increasing the involvement of civil society in action plan processes in order to adapt projects and programmes to the needs of local communities. She appealed for increased support to the UNDP Trust Fund to Combat Desertification and Drought. Insufficient funding was affecting the Programme's effectiveness, particularly in African countries.

49. In the area of biodiversity, UNDP was helping countries to prepare national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Currently, 73 countries were receiving a total of US$ 14.5 million in assistance, primarily from the Global Environment Facility. UNDP was also helping countries to develop an Internet-based national clearing house mechanism in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was working closely with the United Nations Foundation for International Partnerships in formulating its biodiversity programme strategy, which would focus on World Heritage protected sites and coral reefs.

50. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, provided the framework for UNDP activities in the area of climate change. UNDP focused on national communications and regional activities for the joint implementation of commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Global Environment Facility. Financial and technical assistance was currently being provided to 93 non-Annex I countries. Other activities included launching exploratory capacity-building, developing options for the clean development mechanism and reconciling development and climate change mitigation objectives.

51. **Mr. Don Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) said that his organization's priorities included supporting the review and upgrading of climate observing systems and projects under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and participating in the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change; maintaining its leading role in the prediction of the El Niño/La Niña phenomena, participating in preventing and mitigating their negative effects and supporting the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; improving inter-agency cooperation on responses to climate change and variability and combating environmental problems; implementing the results of the conventions and related international agreements and commitments that flowed from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and intensifying its cooperation with other organizations on further analysis of the El Niño/La Niña phenomena and related events.

52. WMO emphasized the need for developing global climate observational networks and systems and research for detecting, monitoring and predicting climate change, and for verifying the effectiveness of measures taken under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. The organization also reaffirmed the need for national meteorological and hydrological services to participate fully in implementing the Convention at national and international levels, and would be collaborating with partner organizations and member States in identifying priorities for action and financial support to improve global climate observing systems in developing areas through capacity-building activities in support of national meteorological and hydrological services, and in continuing to support those activities in close cooperation with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

53. WMO would also continue its close collaboration with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; it would be implementing the Convention through the provision of scientific and technical support and through other activities and commitments to enhance climate and hydrological monitoring networks.

54. WMO would continue to contribute to the protection of the environment and the promotion of the social and economic development of its member States through sustained and collaborative implementation of the climate agenda and related activities, projects agreements with the United nations system and other partner organizations; through enhanced capacity-building for education, training and other collaborative operations for developing countries and other needy areas; and through increased efforts to promote technical cooperation and resource mobilization for sustainable development.

55. **Mr. Albader** (Qatar) noted that sustainable development must be compatible with the preservation of a healthy environment. The health of the environment was currently a cause for concern, especially in the case of the least developed countries. Environmental degradation, as far as those countries were concerned, was closely bound up with the inadequacy of the economic and technological resources available to them. Accordingly, a concerted effort by the international community was needed to arrest such degradation. In that connection, it was regrettable that so little progress had been made in dealing with the issues of desertification and drought. Success in that endeavour would require more international cooperation, with greater input from the developed countries.

56. His Government, having long since grasped the importance of environmental issues, had undertaken a broadly based campaign aimed at raising environmental awareness among the population. Desertification and drought were of particular relevance to his country, and it had recently acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

57. Finally, he expressed the hope that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which the General Assembly had decided to convene in the year 2001, would afford an opportunity of solving the serious problems afflicting those countries, notably desertification and drought, which were impeding their sustainable development.

58. **Ms. Rühl Burzi** (Observer for Switzerland) said that it was essential to promote the universal ratification of the three Rio conventions and progressively to strengthen them and devote particular attention to their implementation. Her delegation was concerned that little progress had been made since the adoption in 1997 of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: greenhouse gas emissions in practically all countries, particularly the highly developed countries, were increasing. Switzerland attached particular importance to the Protocol's rapid entry into force and implementation. The Swiss Parliament had passed a law according to which carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced by 10 per cent by 2010 compared with 1990; if the measures proved inadequate, a tax on carbon dioxide emissions could be introduced in 2004.

59. As for the Convention on Biological Diversity, and particularly the negotiations for a protocol on biosafety, her Government would like to see a rapid conclusion of the negotiations at the resumed session of the first extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in January 2000. On one of the current sticking points — the transboundary movement of living modified organisms intended for consumption or transformation — her Government advocated a differentiated solution taking account of the constraints of the international market and the particular situation of developing countries. Implementation of the Convention's provisions regarding access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing were also priorities for Switzerland, which was engaged in seeking solutions acceptable to both developing and industrialized countries.

60. Her Government had played an active part in developing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and had allocated US$ 53 million in bilateral aid in that area in the period 1997-1999. It attached particular importance to discussing early warning systems, and emphasized the need to make information available at local level.

61. **Ms. Weill-Hallé** (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)), speaking also on behalf of the Global

Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, said that IFAD had given priority to tackling the threat of desertification in Africa and had integrated the Convention objectives in its lending strategy for the region. It was working throughout the developing world to fight land degradation and poverty; in Asia, it had initiated a programme targeting very poor rural households in upland areas, which integrated natural resource management, economic diversification and the creation of local employment.

62. It also took a leading role in promoting implementation of national action programmes, which, along with regional and subregional action programmes, were ideal vehicles for adapting policies to the needs of the people of the drylands. Its most useful contribution to the control of desertification was in laying the groundwork for replicable programmes and projects at local level, placing the emphasis on initiatives stemming from the local people themselves.

63. The Fund was also playing an important role in mobilizing strategic partnerships with UNDP, the World Bank, the Convention secretariat, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNEP, FAO and regional development banks to implement the Convention. Together with the World Bank, it had initiated a joint "accelerated" learning programme with GEF to assist dryland countries in controlling land degradation, alleviating poverty and pursuing global environmental objectives. The Fund and FAO had concluded a memorandum of understanding, and would be working together to assist countries in implementing the Convention and in promoting collaborative activities for sustainable dryland development.

64. The Fund recognized that non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations also had a vital role to play in implementing the Convention, and had provided them with Technical Assistance Grants for specific areas that were crucial to desertification control. IFAD's Extended Cooperation Programme was another useful tool in that it used grants to support innovative NGO activities which backed up existing IFAD activities. The key areas of activity were the creation of an awareness of desertification, the Convention and the Global Mechanism in the context of development; policy formulation for the development of arid and semi-arid zones; the participation of civil society in Convention-related national or regional efforts through group formation; training in and dissemination of resource management technology; and credit management.

65. Reporting on the progress made by the Global Mechanism in its efforts to bring about a more efficient and effective use of existing resources and mobilizing additional resources for the fight against desertification, she said that the Global Mechanism was assisting in developing action programmes, supporting the development and financing of enabling activities which enhanced capacity in planning and implementing action programmes, and pursuing strategic initiatives to mobilize additional resources for the Convention. It was also attempting to create a synergy between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

66. While heartening progress had been made in tackling desertification, there was no room for complacency. The potential of biotechnology for the alleviation of hunger and poverty in drylands remained unexamined, and modalities for favourable access and transfer of technology had to be developed. While progress had been made in exploring linkages between the two Conventions and debt relief initiatives, more remained to be done. Perhaps most important of all was the fulfilment of donor financial commitments in support of the Global Mechanism. Only when those commitments had been fulfilled would the affected developing countries have the resources they needed to tackle desertification head-on.

67. **Ms. Wong** (Singapore) said that as a small island State with no natural resources, her country was acutely aware of the impact on its environmental well-being of external factors, and was committed to playing a proactive role in supporting regional and global initiatives to protect the environment. Singapore had recently acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and strongly supported its call for an integrated approach to addressing the problems of scarce water resources and poverty eradication.

68. Singapore's three-year technical assistance programme for sustainable development which was intended to help developing countries through the provision of training in areas such as urban environmental management, environmental technology, solid waste management, water supply engineering, urban planning and transport management, had so far benefitted more than 1,000 people from 80 countries. Singapore had recently announced a customized technical cooperation programme which would offer 300 training places over the next five years for the small island developing States.

Draft resolution on conservation and sustainable development of central African forests ecosystems (A/C.2/54/L.7)

69. **Mr. Eboutou** (Cameroon), speaking also on behalf of Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo, introduced the draft resolution and announced that at the recent Summit of Central African Heads of State on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests, participating Governments had undertaken to classify 30 per cent of their respective territories as protected areas. Given the difficult economic situation of those countries that was a major decision, and in that connection he drew attention to paragraph 1, which proposed that the General Assembly should decide to establish a trust fund to provide sustainable support for the central African countries in their efforts for the management and conservation of and research into forest ecosystems.

70. Lastly, he drew attention to an editorial change in the third preambular paragraph of the French text.

Agenda item 101: Operational activities for development (*continued*)

(b) Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (*continued*) (A/C.2/54/L.5 and A/C.2/54/L.6)

Draft resolution on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (A/C.2/54/L.5)

71. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, drew attention to an editorial change in the third preambular paragraph. The draft resolution focused on the need for strengthened cooperation between developing countries at the regional and subregional levels, and recognized the important contribution that the forthcoming South Summit in Havana could provide for the strengthening of South-South cooperation.

Draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (A/C.2/54/L.6)

72. **Mr. dos Santos** (Mozambique) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.